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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: DAS BRYZA MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER
KEZERASHVILI

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Begin Summary: On August 14, Minister of Defense David Kezerashvili spoke with DAS Bryza, the Ambassador, and DATT about the MOD's current situation following Russia's invasion. Kezerashvili said Georgia's army troops are now at Vaziani and other bases around Tbilisi, trying to regroup. They have little equipment left. He said President Bush's August 11 speech had given a great boost to his troops' morale. Kezerashvili acknowledged that Russian forces were in Gori, and said they were mining the MOD's new base there. In discussing events in Tskhinvali, he said that Georgia's efforts not to target civilians were transparent. He claimed Russia targeted civilians in Gori and Tskhinvali with Tu-22 Backfire bombers, and those planes used "a lot of bombs." Kezerashvili says 30 soldiers were killed in action and 400 were wounded during the Russian counterattack and bombing of Tskhinvali. DAS Bryza urged Kezerashvili to explain publicly how the escalation occurred during the night of August 7.
End Summary.

12. (C) Kezerashvili said Georgia's army troops are now at Vaziani and other bases around Tbilisi, trying to regroup. They have little equipment left. He said some troops fought well but others were less effective and left as the fight wore on. He did not provide estimates of how many troops were remaining. (Embassy note: We understand that some troops left their units after returning to Tbilisi to check on their families, but in the days since the meeting, many soldiers have rejoined their companies. End Note.) Kezerashvili said President Bush's August 11 speech had given a great boost to his troops' morale. He said the troops had been asking, where are the Americans? Kezerashvili told us he had heard a column of Russian troops had turned around after Bush's speech.

13. (C) Kezerashvili said there were now 20,000 Russian troops in Georgia, with many tanks and much equipment. He claimed they were mining the military base in Gori. (Note: Russian troops or irregulars also set fire to the new barracks at the base. End note.)

14. (C) In Tskhinvali, Kezerashvili said that the South Ossetians destroyed the village of Avnevi with artillery, and began targeting checkpoints near Russian peacekeepers with 122-mm mortars during the cease-fire on August 7. When the firing continued, the Georgians began to return fire. Kezerashvili was clear in arguing that no order was given from the Georgian side to target civilians in Tskhinvali - he said that "anyone can check this information." Rather, they attacked de-facto government buildings (including Parliament, MOIA, and MOD facilities) that were housing Ossetian militia.

15. (C) After the Georgians attacked, Kezerashvili claimed Russia targeted civilians in Gori and Tskhinvali with Tu-22 Backfire bombers. He said the Backfires targeted 95 percent civilian targets and dropped at least 150 bombs on

Tskhinvali. In addition, Backfires targeted Gori, Poti, and other cities. Kezerashvili alleged that Iskander missiles (SS-26) were fired at Gori and the Baku-Supsa pipeline near Rustavi. (Embassy note: Photographs of the Iskander near the Baku-Supsa pipeline were provided by the Georgian Government and shared with the Task Force. End note.) According to Kezerashvili, Georgian MOD troops shot down 17 airplanes and 3 helicopters. The airplanes included Su-24, Su-25, and Su-27 jets, and two reconnaissance planes. Kezerashvili claimed that he lost 30 soldiers KIA and 400 wounded from the Russian bombing and counterattack in Tskhinvali.
TEFFT